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SURVEY OF TURKEY'S BILECIK PROVINCE

[Comment. The following report is a summary of one of
a series of surveys of Turkish provinces published in special
weekly supplements of the Istanbul daily newspaper Vatan.]

General

Bilecik is a province of ruins and poverty, the legacy of the War for Independence. The government has now selected it as the area in which to apply its "model province" project. The aim of the project is to take a Turkish city and, by giving it the maximum aid, to satisfy all its needs and to eliminate all economic and cultural deficiencies. Every ministry is allocating to Bilecik as much money as its budget permits. Studies are being made to revive the silk and grape industry and to establish a sound price policy. The possibility of extending the telephone network to the villages is being studied. A plan for 700 kilometers of village roads, to cost 350,000 lira, is under consideration.

Bilecik is essentially an agricultural province with a wide variety of soils, climates, and crops. Principal crops are cereals, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and industrial plants. Agriculture has been but little mechanized, there being only 38 tractors in the province.

With respect to cereals, 350,000 decarees are devoted to wheat, 70,000 decarees to barley, 15,000 decarees to rye, and 40,000 decarees to corn. Legumes account for 31,000 decarees. Cotton is a relatively new crop along the Sakarya River; average annual production is 250,300 tons. The annual sugar-beet crop of 40,000-45,000 tons is shipped to the Eskisehir sugar factory. The tobacco crop totals 160,000 tons of good-quality tobacco in the central district alone. The main fruits are quince, apples, and grapes; the main vegetables are carrots, tomatoes, and okra; most of them are export products. There is as yet no canning factory.

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The silk industry was once very important and Bilecik silks and velvets were exported throughout the world. At one time, the province contained 22 factories with more than 600 looms. The use of rayon, falling prices, and the destruction of the mulberry trees virtually brought the industry to a standstill. An attempt has now been under way for several years to revive the industry. A 4,000-member cooperative is active and is operating a silk factory; there are still several times as many independent producers as belong to the cooperative. Bilecik's present annual production of cocoons is 400,000 kilograms.

Viticulture is also much less important today than in the past, but the Ziraat (Agriculture) Bank is now extending credits in an effort to encourage the planting of new vineyards. The Agriculture Ministry has established a nursery in the vicinity of Bilecik Station, which annually distributes 20,000-30,000 shoots to the peasants. There are now 25,000 decares of vineyards, and the area is constantly increasing. Eighty percent of the grape production is exported to Eskisehir and other provinces while the remainder is consumed locally. Wine production is also beginning; one plant has already been built by a Mehmet Gercek.

Mining

The mountain range extending from Bursa to Bilecik contains rich mineral deposits, including manganese, lignite, and asbestos. At present, the provincial government is in contact with several German firms who have expressed an interest in the exploitation of the asbestos deposits.

The province also has numerous rock and marble quarries, which have long been operated. The marble quarries are not being worked at present because of lack of capital.

Immigrants

The Directorate General of Soil and Settlement has assigned 265 families of Bulgarian immigrants to the province. Of these, 140 families have been settled and provided with homes. Also, 5,592 decares of land, 55,400 kilograms of seed, 39 wagons, 61 span of oxen, 63 plows, and 14 harrows have been distributed to them. In addition, the Ziraat Bank has provided them with 141,990 lira in credits.

Arrangements have been completed for settling the remaining 125 families.

Education

Ninety-four percent of the children of school age in the province are attending school -- a total of 15,802 (7,112 girls, 8,690 boys). There are a total of 226 village schools and 13 others in cities and towns: three in Bilecik; two each in Pazarcik, Bozoyuk, and Inonu; and one each in Kuplu, Sogut, Golpazan, and Osmaneli. In addition, Bilecik has a girls' evening trade school, a men's secondary trade school, and a regular secondary school. There are also secondary schools in Bozoyuk, Golpazan, and Sogut, while in Osmaneli and Inonu, societies have been organized with the aim of opening similar schools. An orphan's school was established in 1949 in Yarisar, which now has 72 girl students and a teaching staff of eight.

Health

The general health situation is very good. There is a 35-bed state hospital in Bilecik, dispensaries in Golpazan and Sogut, and a health center in Bozoyuk. Government doctors, health officers, and midwives are maintained in the central and four other districts.

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Bilecik Municipality

The city of Bilecik was left in ruins by the War of Independence and is still only half rebuilt. As yet, no development plan has been prepared. The city is actually in two parts: old Bilecik, or Bilecik Station, and the new section, which lies on high ground 5 kilometers from the railroad. This situation makes development difficult.

To meet electric power needs, the city is considering the construction of a hydroelectric plant 3 kilometers from the city at Karam; funds have already been requested from the Ministries of Public Works and the Interior. The city is also undertaking to improve the worn-out water system.

The present mayor is Necmi Guney, son of Mustafa Kemal Guney, who was a deputy to the first Grand National Assembly. Although the FRP controls the Municipal Assembly, Guney claims to be strictly independent.

Bozoyuk District

The people in general are farmers. Sugar beets are now becoming an important crop. Viticulture was once important, and steps are now under way to revive it; new vineyards have been planted and more are expected. Vineyards now occupy between 7,000-8,000 decares.

The town of Bozoyuk is not too prosperous; 400 families have moved to Eskisehir alone in the last 2 years. Owing to the availability of electric power, there is some light industry, which consists chiefly of textile manufacture and woodworking, especially furniture.

The town was completely destroyed in the War for Independence but has been rebuilt since then.

Sogut District

Sogut, one of the first capitals of the Ottoman Empire, is the center of a district with a population of 23,985. The chief occupation of the people is the raising of fruits, vegetables, grapes, and silkworms. Cotton and sugar beets are becoming increasingly important. Cotton is now the chief occupation of the Sakarya valley villages of Tozman, Caykoy, Torpak, Akkoy, Inlihisar, Koyunlu, Esri, Akcasu, Eyrat, Calti, Tuzakli, Hamitabat, Boreak, and Kure. Sugar beets, a relatively new crop, is concentrated around Sogut, Zeyv, Kepen, Oluklu, and Savcibey. In connection with these crops, attention is being paid to irrigation matters; plans for small irrigation projects in seven Sakarya valley villages have been formulated.

Although Sogut is attached to Bilecik Province, it is threatened administratively by Eskisehir Province, to which 18 of its villages have been transferred in the last 8 years. Eskisehir is also the market for all of the district's agricultural products.

Of the district's 37 villages, only one -- an eight-family village -- lacks a school; while only seven villages lack roads.

The town of Sogut is a center for ironwork; its plows are prized in Bilecik and neighboring provinces. There are two silk plants and two cotton gins in Sogut.

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